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Challenge Yourself to Learn More Than is Being Taught

By Elizabeth Santiago

UCF Forum columnist

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When I was a freshman, a psychology course completely changed my perspective on life.

I remember on the first day of class my professor provided a reality check to us that we so desperately needed. He wanted to erase the stigma that students often feel that they should just go to college with the focus of obtaining a job upon graduation.

Most of us, myself included, came to the university with career goals in place, and college was a vital piece to the puzzle. Even now, many students I know view their colleges as vocational schools rather than institutions that promote *learning*.

In 2012, according to UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, 74.6 percent of incoming university students said an important reason to attend college is "to make more money."

Where has the love for learning gone?

In prior centuries, when we had less technology, learning was more appreciated. All the progress that has been made up to this point is due to a natural curiosity and a hunger for learning that could only be fed with answers.

Galileo, Plato, and Newton were not focused on the wealth they would gain nor the title they would hold when they sought the answers to their many questions. They succeeded because they learned how to learn, and with that they were able to set ideas that would propel us into the centuries to come.

The majors that we declare all have a unique purpose within them. Each class that is taught provides a different glimpse of a bigger picture. With every component that is

understood, we are more equipped to understand society's progress and continue expanding on those foundations.

It is the knowledge that we obtain, our ability to learn and our potential to grow that gives significance to our diplomas. This is what graduate programs and employers look for. Sometimes we are so focused on the end goal that we lose sight of education's purpose.

Education provides us with certain tools that you can't copy, paste, or even Google. Unfortunately, a majority of students haven't gotten that memo.

In 2006, a panel of higher education representatives released the following statement: "We are disturbed by evidence that the quality of student learning at U.S. colleges and universities is inadequate and, in some cases, declining..." and "Employers report repeatedly that many new graduates they hire are not prepared to work, lacking the critical thinking, writing and problem-solving skills needed in today's workplaces."

Though our opportunity and technology has increased significantly, many students are still finding themselves unprepared to take on the world. I believe that students have moved into an era in which many study with the purpose of passing exams rather than studying to truly *learn* and *understand* the material and the tools that are provided.

UCF is known for its diversity, but we are all intricately connected by our pursuit of knowledge. We have been provided the best of teachers and many other resources in order to ensure that we are successful in our endeavors and expand our minds to new horizons.

Let us prepare best for our futures by challenging ourselves to learn more than what is being taught and use our classes as a foundation for learning outside the classroom. Let us change ourselves to branching out and familiarizing ourselves with concepts outside of our "life plans." I am sure we'd find an unexpected connection.

Instead of regarding college as just a prerequisite to our careers, let us see the beauty in learning. Know that with every exam, assignment and lecture, we are one step closer to cracking life's code.

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